

LARIMER COUNTY | BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

P.O. Box 1190, Fort Collins, Colorado 80522-1190, 970.498.5700, Larimer.gov

Environmental and Science Advisory Board MINUTES

Date: April 14, 2026

Time: 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: in-person only, 200 W Oak St, Fort Collins, CO 80521

Contact: Heidi Pruess, pruesshb@co.larimer.co.us, 970-498-7138

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Rodger Ames	X	John Kefalas *		Asenath Miron
Tasha Carr - Chair	X	Heidi Pruess †	X	
Anna Cloud				
Jeremy Cooper	X			
Leo Grassens - Vice Chair	X			
Matthew Haag				
Azmal Hossan	X			
Kathryn Inman	X			
Joe Izaguirre III	X			
Michael Lee Jones				
Jared McGlothlin	X			
Nicole Poncelet-Johnson				
Cathelyne Powers				
Chris Wood				

X = present; v= present virtually; * = Commissioner Liaison; † = ESAB Liaison; ‡=Youth.

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

- **Introduction of members, staff and guests**
- **Commissioner's Update**
 - Commissioner Kefalas shared the following updates with ESAB members via email:
 - [Fire Danger and Response Sheriff Presentation on 3/30](#) is worth watching;
 - The County received a \$5.2M ECMC grant to plug 50 orphan oil and gas wells and will entail clean up of the well pad sites;

- the Livermore Community Meeting is on 4/21 to update folks on the Steinhoff Hill SLB property (we submitted a letter to SLB for Stewardship Trust Designation for this parcel and two others in LC, as I recall);
- Poudre River Trail Ribbon Cutting is scheduled for 6/13; and
- Landfill Ribbon Cutting Ceremony is scheduled for 7/6.

- **Discussion Items -**

- **Working Session :** Each working team gathered to begin developing content for the ESAB Annual Plan regarding their topics. Teams were asked to finalize their comments for staff to assemble the draft plan; comments due no later than April 28, 2026.
 - Air Quality - History of air quality research. Working with CSU on air quality monitoring to provide speakers, assist data collection, and provide analysis of data to recommend future actions. Funding has resulted in expanded air quality data collection and analysis. Presentations partnering with the City of Fort Collins Air Quality Board. Recommendations will be coming forward for: State level rulemaking, continuing to support data collection and analysis, communicating with residents near sources, and partnering with municipalities.
 - Land Use - Focused on data centers in 2025-2026. Regional Transportation and general Land Use topics still need to be addressed and the Land Use topic will be recommended to continue to be part of the workplan next year.
 - Carbon Capture/Sequestration - Recommending an educational program for recycling and the new landfill. Research in composting and waste management highlighted. Relationship between data centers and carbon capture may be a topic for the future.
- Environmental Stewardship Award Selection
 - Concerns regarding the NOCO Wildlife Center included this applicant having received the award in 2022 and this application did not speak to any new projects or efforts since 2022; new ESAB criteria indicates up to 3 awards so of the 4 applications this application is rejected.
 - ESAB members voiced questions regarding the Red Feather Mitigation Project including the County's Office of Emergency Management as one of the partners. The County could not have implemented this project on its own as a single entity and the ESAB will leave this question of award to the County Commissioners.
 - Motion to approve the 3 applicants : Jeff Puckett, Peaks to People, and Red Feather Mitigation Project; Inman motioned, Cooper seconded; all in favor.

- **Approval of Minutes**

- Draft February 2026
- Draft March 2026
 - Motion to approve both minutes by Cooper, motion seconded by Inman, all in favor.

- **Updates and Round Table**

- Citizen email forwarded prior to the meeting to be shared was regarding data centers as follows: I just wanted to share this Western Resource Advocates document, Data Center Impacts in the West:

- Policy Solutions for Water and Energy Use

<https://westernresourceadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Data-Center-Impacts-in-the-West.pdf> Found here

<https://westernresourceadvocates.org/webinars/data-center-impacts-in-co/>

- Speaking Up for Cleaner Air event, May 5th, 6-8pm at Fort Collins Museum of Discovery; click here to register col.st/q3q4v
- Conference proposed by the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments regarding high ozone issues. The County Commissioners have already sent letters of support for grant funding for this event. Information will be shared as it becomes available.

- **Agenda Topics for Future Meetings** – The May meeting will include: Annual Report review, Draft 2026-2027 Workplan suggestions, Data Center presentation.

- **Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Board of County Commissioner Priority Topic:

Carbon Capture and Sequestration and the Circular Economy

Board of County Commissioner Question:

What are the best practices in this space and review of practices the County is considering? Can we create policies to encourage this? What is the science behind carbon capture/sequestration in agricultural and forest lands? How is the County aligned with State legislation? How do we effectively recycle plastic - plasmolysis - to produce energy?

Environmental and Science Advisory Board Response and Recommendations:

- The county's current construction of the new landfill and its new capacities (re: recycling) are steps forward in reducing carbon emissions.
 - *ESAB recommends development of an educational program that dispels confusion and mistrust about recycling, which might be impacting low recycling rates among communities.* This education program might also include a promotion of the new landfill to increase awareness of its capacities.
- Composting/recycling programs are a biologically guided method of carbon capture/sequestration that have been relatively successful in [Boulder, CO](#) and [Austin, TX](#).
 - The county's policies regarding food waste appear well aligned with state law (HB25-1166) in creating opportunities for eliminating food waste both at the corporate level and residential level (e.g., Veg Out; Compost Queen City Pilot Program; Save Your Food)
 - *We recommend increased implementation following an evaluation of net emissions of these programs.*
- We recommend exploring participation in a voluntary carbon credit market for the reforestation program, which might provide funds for reinvesting in the reforestation program for the county.

Board of County Commissioner Priority Topic:
Land Use

Board of County Commissioner Question:

1. What changes should we be looking at to reduce water use, protect air quality, reduce GHG, incentive carbon capture and sequestration?
2. Are there additions to 1041 permitting that we should consider?
3. Is it feasible to have a northern Colorado regional transit system that includes Light rail connecting with bus rapid transit and front range passenger rail?
This may be more of a land use - smart growth issue.

On Item 1: General land use topics.

We recommend including these priority topics in the 2026-2027 work plan.

On Item 2: Land Use group

The sub group focused on the impact of large scale data centers.

In the discussion with Larimer Staff, the staff recommended that we NOT add this to the 1041 review process but instead explore special regulations for data centers. The ESAB would like to continue addressing large-scale data centers with staff to come up with a separate process for Data Centers.

Of particular concern was “Artificial Intelligence Data Centers” or “High Impact/Large Load Infrastructure Facility”. Their impact is dramatically higher than that of regular “Data Centers” (data servers, email servers and ISP)

The following “Land Use” implications of large AI Data centers were identified:

- Public service strain (Electricity and Water)
- Waste Water treatment plants (WWTP)
- Water deprivation / Water use
- Use of non tributary water (GW level, wells)
- Light pollution
- Noise emissions
- Air pollution
- Impact on the job market
- Carbon emissions
- Traffic impact
- Wildlife and ecological impact
- Thermal footprint and “heat index”.
- Aesthetic impact
- End of life guarantees
- Cultural impact

The plan is for this subgroup to expand on each of these items and generate a report.

Item 3: Northern Colorado regional transit

We recommend that the ESAB review the Regional Transportation plan and provide feedback as part of the 2026-2027 work plan.

Board of County Commissioner Priority Topic:
Air Quality

Board of County Commissioner Question from the Workplan:
TBD : Work with Environmental Health

Environmental and Science Advisory Board Response and Recommendations:

History of ESAB efforts:

ESAB Air Quality Monitoring Memo - December 2021:

In December of 2021, the ESAB produced a memo outlining two strategies to expand air quality monitoring in Larimer County. The memo focused on 1.) near-source monitoring, with a focus on evaluating the impact of air toxics on residents who live in close proximity to air pollution sources, and 2.), ozone precursor monitoring, with a focus on determining the chemical precursors that contribute to high ground-level summer time ozone in Larimer County.

Monitoring emissions near major industrial operations, such as oil and gas facilities, is important for the County due to potential adverse impacts on sensitive population groups living near the emissions sources, specifically children, the elderly, and people with asthma or other respiratory conditions. Similarly, ozone precursor monitoring is essential to gain a better understanding of controllable emission sources that contribute to the Denver Metro/North Front Range's (DMNFR) classification as a nonattainment area for both the 2008 and 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

CSU Proposal - November 2022:

In November of 2022, CSU Atmospheric Science Professors Jeff Collet and Emily Fischer prepared a proposal on behalf of the ESAB for a low-cost monitoring program to address high ground-level ozone. While vetting this proposal, the ESAB invited guest speakers from neighboring municipalities and local community groups. Both the City of Boulder and the Larimer County - based Larimer Alliance address the Board. Larimer Alliance proposed following Boulder County's lead and contracting the private firm Boulder Air to conduct air toxics and ozone precursor monitoring on behalf of the County..

In contrast to the Boulder Air approach, which provides speciated volatile organic compounds (VOC) measurements necessary for a comprehensive ozone precursor monitoring program, the CSU proposal would have provided similar molecular composition analysis, albeit at a lower cost. Ultimately, neither the CSU proposal nor Boulder Air were funded by the BoCC. However, County funds were directed to LCDHE to expand ozone and NOx monitoring (NOx and VOCs are the main pollutants that contribute to ozone production) in collaboration with CDPHE. Directing funds toward the additional monitors would prove to be a wise investment because it both increased the County's ability to evaluate public health risks related to exposure to these pollutants, and the monitors would augment future ozone precursor monitoring campaigns.

EPA Air Toxics Grant - October 2023 through September 2026:

An EPA grant awarded to CSU, the City of Fort Collins, and Larimer County took a major step towards addressing the need to study the health impacts of near-source emissions in Larimer County. During this campaign, air toxics monitoring was conducted in areas with significant oil and gas development in Larimer County and parts of western Weld County, with a focus on impacts of oil and gas operations on local communities. The grant included significant community outreach, a strong DEI component, and engaged local at risk communities. A significant finding was that in addition to industrial oil and gas facilities, gas stations themselves can be major sources of air toxics impacting local populations.

FROZE - Summer 2025:

The Front Range Ozone Experiment (FROZE) was an observational research campaign conducted by the CSU Department of Atmospheric Science in Summer 2025. The campaign focused on collecting stationary and mobile measurements from around the Front Range metropolitan area to determine the distribution of ozone precursors. Results from this campaign could provide information on what is the major source of ozone precursors in Larimer County (oil/gas production vs vehicle emissions vs biogenic emissions) as well as the geographic locations of sources. A key accomplishment of the campaign was providing speciated (molecule specific) measurements of air quality in Larimer County communities that have not been previously available.

Preliminary results show that emissions sources responsible for ozone NAAQS violations vary across the Front Range. For example, violating monitors near the Denver Metro area have a larger vehicle emissions component than monitors in Larimer County, such as Fort Collins West, which is more strongly influenced by oil and gas emissions during high ozone events. Findings from FROZE will help inform emissions control strategies across the Front Range, and serve as valuable constraints on regional air quality modeling used during the State Implementation Plan (SIP) process.

ESAB Recommendations 2026:

- 1) ESAB encourages Larimer County to continue supporting CSU and local organizations in their efforts to invest in near-source monitoring in communities close to oil and gas operations.
- 2) Actively participate in rulemaking with the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission. Advocate for stricter emissions limits on oil & gas operations, enhanced leak detection and repair (LDAR) requirements, and stronger ozone precursor controls.
- 3) Coordinate with other Front Range counties for stronger influence to address inter-jurisdictional pollutant transfer with the state regulatory agencies.
- 4) Communicate air quality risks clearly to residents with a focus on communities near industrial activity.